DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 456 RC 016 128

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TITLE Native American Studies: A Utah Perspective.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Historical Materials (060) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT Wicazo Sa Review; v2 n2 p19-23 Fall 1986

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *American Indian Education; American Indians; *American Indian Studies; Church Related Colleges; Cultural Education; *Educational History; Educational Policy; *Educational Trends; Ethnic Groups; Higher Education; Institutional Characteristics; Intellectual Disciplines; Minority Group Teachers; Models; *Student Personnel Services; Universities
IDENTIFIERS *Brigham Young University UT; *Utah

ABSTRACT

Utah has missed an opportunity to foster, support, or lead out with exemplary Native American Studies programs within its higher education network. Considering the intertwined religious and political roots of the state establishment, the overall commitment to the American Indians as a whole has not been a major political issue. Brigham Young University (BYU) once had more than 600 American Indian students participating in a highly successful Native American Studies program. In the late 1970s BYU was criticized for seemingly favoring American Indians over other racial minority groups. In response, the university lumped together under Multicultural Education all racial minority groups including international students. Additional factors have interfered with the development of the program including tribal funding policies that place time limits on students, push them toward science and computer-related majors, and favor public in-state schools. Currently, the BYU Native American Studies program does not encourage Native American students or involve Native American academicians. Although housed in a private, church-related institution, it is the only recognized Native American Studies program in the state. Given the conditions of state and national economics, it is doubtful that public higher education will set in motion programs of its own. (JHZ)

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Native American Studies: A Utah Perspective

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Utah has missed an opportunity to foster, support, or lead out with exemplary Native American Studies programs within its higher education network. Considering the intertwined religious and political roots of the establishment of the state, the overall commitment to the American Indians as a whole has not been a major priority issue. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints dominates the state with 70 percent membership.[1] Within this grouping, one percent of the Utah LDS membership is American Indian, four tenths of one percent male, six tenths of one percent female.[2] According to the 1980 U.S. Census, 1.32 percent of the Utah population claimed American Indian heritage.[3]

One of the basic tenents of the LDS Church holds the ancestry of the American Indians in very high regard. Coming to grips with the contemporary American Indians has had mixed reactions and results. Overall, the treatment and attitudes expressed toward American Indians have been fairly positive. It has been within such a milieu that Brigham Young University provided the State of Utah with its only Native American Studies program.

The Brigham Young University campus is located in Provo, approximately 45 miles south of Salt Lake City. It boasts a student body population of 27,000 and is regarded as the largest private university in the nation. Currently there are less than 200 identifiable American Indian students enrolled, a far cry from the heyday of high enrollment figures of 600 in the mid-1970's. In 1974 the record boasted "77 different tribes or tribal blends from 38 states, the largest group of Indian students at any university."[4]

Brigham Young University once had more than 600 American Indian students participating in an American Studies program. Now there are less than 200 identifiable American Indian students enrolled in the university.

It was during the early 1970's when the Native American Studies program was conceived, approved, and implemented as an academic minor receiving a catalogue listing by 1977–78. Across the nation, other institutions of higher education had felt pressures through the 1960's into the 1970's from their respective students with concern from the public to establish ethnic studies programs. There were those campuses whose programs were established following demonstrations, petitions, threats, and violence. Nevertheless, Brigham Young University methodically observed and attempted to evaluate the variety of ethnic studies programs which sprang up nationally.

Spearheading the 1973–74 undertaking were Drs. John R. Maestas, V. Con Osborne, and Fred R. Gowans of the Department of Indian Education. Dr. Maestas, a Tewa Pueblo, would eventually serve as department chairman as would Dr. Osborne in turn.[5] Dr. Gowans was named the Na-

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tive American Studies Coordinator, a position he retains today. During the period 1981–1985, Dr. Janice White Clemmer, Wasco-Shawnee-Delaware, acted as the Associate Coordinator.

The Native American students and the faculty worked together in the development of the NAS program.

Even though Brigham Young University had a large population of Native American Indian students, no rioting or other violence ensued demanding a program be established. Individual students did speak with the department chairman and other faculty members about the possibility of a Native American Studies program and were supportive of proposals that were developing.

There were the challenges and pitfalls to the embryonic ideas, which were not unlike those experienced by other programs nationally. Dr. Wilcomb E. Washburn of the Smithsonian Institution offered a status report as of 1975 which discussed some of the problems many Native American Indian Studies programs encountered.[6] The overall dilemma was one that each program faced: which clientele was to be served? In order to fit into the mold of academics without being attacked by various disciplines across campus, working together and having interrelated course offerings and utilizing interdisciplinary faculty would hopefully bolster up what Washburn observed as "the commitment to finding the truth both as an end and a method."

Qualified American Indian faculty members tried to satisfy an academic role, a community and tribal role, and serve as role models to Native American students.

Another aspect of serving clientele focused on seeking and hiring qualified American Indian faculty members who would serve as scholars and role models for the students and community. Washburn's report was highly critical of ethnic exclusivity. Dr. Terry P. Wilson has noted, "Understandably, and with good reason, many believe employing Indians with an expertise in the study of their own heritage has seemed the simplest, if not wholly satisfactory, way of trying to meet that requirement."[7] However, over the years, Wilson has observed, "In the actual operation of NAS programs this has not occurred. Non-Indians have been hired to fill teaching and staff positions and . . . the classes attract enrollments made up largely of white students."[8] Those American Indians who had the academic credentials were caught in a crossfire of satisfying the Mr. Chips academic role, militant Red Power advocate, community worker, and simultaneously establish a link with a reservation experience or background. As Wilson has poignantly stated, Native American Studies represents the only academic discipline in which one is expected to approximate a living example of the subject as well as teach it.[9]

The courses taught in the proposed Native American Studies program would utilize persons who had American Indian related scholarship and experience. At that time, Dr. John R. Maestas was the only qualified, credentialled Native American person who taught at BYU. He was joined in the fall of 1980 by Dr. Janice White Clemmer who had the distinction of being the only American Indian woman in the United States to earn two masters degrees and two doctoral degrees.[10] Also employed by the Department of Indian Education were three other Native Americans who served in a variety of capacities and also taught, but did not have their doctorate degrees: Kenneth Sekaquaptewa, Hopi, administrative assistant; Darlene Monteaux Herndon Oliver, Rosebud Sioux, a registered nurse who earned her masters degree in 1985; and John R. Rainer, Jr., Taos-Creek,

with a masters in music.

Housed with the Department of Indian Education were several persons who blended their expertise of academic endeavors while maintaining a dual appointment with other disciplines as well. There was a problem of mixing academic faculty with service personnel under one department and having the whole group administered by the College of Student Life. The Brigham Young University NAS program hoped to have academic credibility by seeking a home outside a dominant service oriented college. Nevertheless, conditions remained interlinked until an administrative mandate was issued in 1984 which removed the academic faculty from the College of Student Life. At that time, NAS was farmed out to the Department of History.

From the inception of the Idea of Native American Studies program on the BYU campus, there was wide-spread student support. As Wilson has noted, "The development of Native American Studies in higher education has been closely attached to two related topics: the presence of American Indians in colleges and universities and the rise of ethnic studies generally."[11] In this same vein, Dr. Maestas stated there was a need for students to learn not only about their own tribal backgrounds, but other tribal people as well. In this way, the cultural aspects would broaden both Native American and non-Native American awareness through a variety of offerings.

A large number of Native American students coupled with the rise of ethnic studies generally assisted the early success of the BYU program.

Dr. V. Con Osborne noted in a recent interview that there were several goals in mind when proposing NAS:

1. Academic offerings for American Indians so they could obtain a balanced background in their tribal heritage as well as other tribes.
2. Expertise was available within the Department of Indian Education and there would be no increase in budget or manpower.
3. The Native American Studies would be offered as one of the elective minors on campus. Non-Indians would be encouraged to enroll in classes as well.[12]

By coordinating with the College of Education's Secondary Education, Native American Studies gained support as a teaching minor. Dr. Wallace E. Allred, then chairman of the Department of Secondary Education, accepted the proposal with minor revisions and was a strong supporter. He recognized the value of having prospective educators and related interested students become knowledgeable about American Indians and issues.

The overall proposal was presented to a variety of inter-departmental committees for comments and feedback before finally obtaining administrative approval. It was then presented to the Utah State Board of Education in Salt Lake City for acceptance or denial as an education minor. As the only serious proposal dealing with American Indians within the Native American Studies program concept, the Board of Education approved it without revisions.

Dr. Fred R. Gowans had prepared a statement of purpose for the program:

> Many Indian and non-Indian students graduating from Brigham Young University in studies such as education, sociology, business, and political science will be brought into contact with the native American people because of the nature of their occupations.
>
> The Native American studies minor is designed to augment and supplement students of various disciplines so that they may become more culturally

aware of the heritage of the American Indians, thus promoting better understanding and cooperation.

The minor has been designed so that you may select classes from a variety of interdepartmental courses if desiring a general background, or a combination of classes can be selected for an in-depth study in a specific discipline.

In connection with the American Studies Program offered at Brigham Young University, there is the opportunity to obtain a major in American Studies with course work designed to emphasize the Native American.[13]

There had been high hopes to have the NAS program become a major as well by the late 1970's. Tentative study of the national job market affected administrative support besides budgetary considerations to quash efforts for a NAS major status.

While the Native American Indians constituted the largest racial minority on campus, there were several groups which advocated Chicano Studies as well in 1975 and 1977. The BYU administration, though sympathetic, could rally no support from the Utah State Board of Education for inclusion as a viable approved minor or major for educators and certification. Programs such as foreign languages were the responsibility of the College of Humanities, which itself was organized as a separate administrative unit in 1965. Within this college existed a small interdepartmental program known as Latin-American Studies. Certainly there would have been challenges of administration, politics, faculty, budget, and housing of a separate prospective Chicano Studies. The usage of the term Chicano carried with it radical interpretations. While the university was willing to support a Native American Studies program, they were not ready to become a prospective hotbed of potential strident controversy dealing with Chicano issues in a conservative community.

Multicultural Programs absorbed the Native American Studies program, other racial minority groups of American origin, and the international student program as well.

Criticism had been leveled at Brigham Young University for seemingly favoring American Indians over other racial minority groups. Recruitment, academic offerings, financial aid, work-study programs, academic counseling, *The Eagle's Eye* Indian student newspaper, the Tribe of Many Feathers Club, Miss Indian BYU, Indian Week, and even the Native American Studies program came under attack from some quarters which felt neglected. Rather than pit the minority groups against each other, efforts were made to assuage negative comments. The lumping together of not only the racial minority groups of American origin, but the International Students Office as well came under the jurisdiction of a troika arrangement: The Department of Indian Education, The Department of Multicultural Education, and the International Students Office. By 1984 the Multicultural Education aspect encompassed each of the three with one chairman. By Fall 1985 the collective group was retitled Multicultural Programs and headed by a director.

For the most part, the academic faculty were relocated across campus within their original dual disciplines. The two credentialled Native American faculty opted for challenges and changes with Dr. Maestas as part of the College of Fine Arts and Communications and Dr. Clemmer in the College of Education.

Against the melange of change, the Native American Studies faculty became fractionated leaving Dr. Gowans as the coordinator of a program

whose future was unpredictable. The Department of History negotiated to take under its wing the program which had a strong history offering, yet was also supplemented by special financing routed through the Multicultural Programs.

The vision of having Native American faculty teaching Native American Studies has dimmed to the point of extinction on the BYU campus. The program itself has approximately 80 students who have declared Native American Studies as a minor. Of this grouping, one-third are Native Americans, according to Dr. Gowans' records.

Only one third of the students pursuing NAS as a minor are Native Americans.

Students must take 14 hours of core courses which include: NAS 101, Introduction to Indian America; NAS 207, A Historical and Socio-Cultural Examination of Indian America; NAS 323, Introduction to Indian Education; NAS 490R, Seminar of Native American Studies; English 280R, Literature: The Indian in American Literature.

Eight hours of elective courses must be taken from the following: NAS 111, American Indian Art Appreciation; NAS 307, Contemporary Issues in Indian America; NAS 357, American Indian Military Campaigns; NAS 369R, Special Topics; NAS 498R, Directed Readings; Anthropology 317, Native Peoples of North America; Family and Local History Studies 261, Introduction to Family and Local History: Genealogy, Native Americans; Political Science 346, Indian Tribal Government; History 362, The American West to the Mexican War; History 363, The American West Since the Gold Rush; and History 369, The Indian in American History.

The program, which overall offers classes of a similar nature at other universities sponsoring Native American Studies, stands alone in the Utah higher education network. Other four-year institutions include the University of Utah, Salt Lake City; Weber State, Ogden; Utah State University, Logan; and Southern Utah State University, Cedar City. These schools generally include classes relating to the American Indian within history, anthropology, sociology, education, and social work programs.

The University of Utah has made a concerted effort to provide interested students with ethnic studies offerings and is the only university in Utah to have a Vice President of Minority Affairs. There are credentialled American Indian academicians involved in research, teaching, and administration, but they are not distributed throughout the university. The College of Social Work has the most visible Native American scholars in the state. The University of Utah's American Indian enrollment numbers less than 200 students.

No ethnic studies programs are available at Utah's two-year colleges.

Overall, the two-year schools make no pretense of offering a wide variety of ethnic studies classes for or about Native Americans. These schools include the College of Eastern Utah, Price; Dixie College, St. George; Snow College, Ephriam; and the Utah Technical Colleges of Provo-Orem and the Salt Lake City campus. The only other four-year private institution outside of BYU is Westminster College, Salt Lake City, with an enrollment of approximately 2,000 students.

Budgetary cuts have been instigated throughout the nation and have been felt in the Utah education system running the gamet from elementary schools up through higher education. Utah State University, the University

of Utah, and Weber State have already publicly announced significant belt-tightening measures which will result in the release of numerous faculty and administrative positions in addition to many campus related programs. Proposing Native American Studies programs for universities which do not have any at this time in the State of Utah would be fruitless. On the other hand, Brigham Young University as a private institution, has been quietly trimming a variety of internal budgets over the past few years without blatantly shocking the general public or the LDS Church membership which helps sustain the school.

The current funding climate precludes any further development of NAS. In fact, some programs may be severely cut or lost altogether.

Native American Studies have financially been put on hold at BYU. There are no immediate plans to recruit new qualified teaching faculty for the program. Indeed, attracting those American Indian scholars with advanced degrees who would be deemed acceptable to the administration and trustees to BYU has been challenging.

American Indian students themselves often do not have the luxury to enroll in more than a few classes offered in the NAS minor at this time. There are several reasons for this: many tribal education funding policies have lists stating which majors will be considered for priority financial aid. The sciences appear to be a priority classification along with computer related programs. Native American Studies are often not listed or viewed as a supplementary consideration. Surprisingly, teachers or education majors are not in the top third of such a listing.

Tribal funding policies affect NAS programs by placing time limits on students, by pushing students toward science and computer related majors, and by favoring public in-state schools.

The Navajo Nation's educational funding policies, for example, have set the tone nationally for numerous tribes who have also proposed funding list criteria. Higher consideration will be given to enrolled tribal members who have been born, raised, and educated on the reservation. Those electing to continue higher educational endeavors who select public in-state institutions meet with approval over those who prefer either in-state or out-of-state private universities.

Brigham Young University has been raising the entrance requirements over the years and competition is keen to attend the school. Considering that the LDS Church has a world-wide membership of six million, a sizable number of families desire their children to become educated at BYU. There is no lack of applications throughout the year. The enrollment ceiling has been met at this time. Those American Indian students, once in the door, become part of the larger campus community. They must meet the rigorous challenges of balancing academics, social life, and ecclesiastical involvement.

Native American Studies, while sounding promising and interesting, becomes a lesser concern as the American Indian students labor diligently to fulfill hours of university required basic classes entitled General Education. There are rarely any racial minority professors the students can identify with in their quest for a diploma.

Tribal funding also whips the students toward the finishing line by placing time limits on the length financial aid will be extended. The attrition rate among college students has created a stir among other tribal members who have become highly critical of funding potential and actual dropouts.

As Wilson has pointed out, "The non-Indian enrollments in NAS classes provide sufficient evidence that coming generations of Americans will continue to be interested in the Indians."[14] Many American Indian

students, while already a minority, do not feel comfortable in a predominantly Anglo class which is studying about Indians. The Indian student easily becomes the focus of the class, a position not eagerly sought.

The climate in which the BYU Native American Studies program exists is mixed. It does not encourage Native American students. It does not involve Native American academicians in research, teaching, or as role models for the students. It is not a showcase program, nor is it the leader it could easily be within the state. It is housed in a private, religious sponsored institution. Yet, it is the only recognized Native American Studies program in the state.

There is then the challenge to the public higher education network to set in motion programs of their own. However, given the condition of state and national economics, it is doubtful such programs will be proposed. In the meantime, the BYU Native American Studies program will continue to be basically a one-man band in need of more musicians, music, bookings, and audience.

Dr. Janice White Clemmer is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon, with her tribal heritages of Wasco-Shawnee-Delaware. She is currently the designated Multicultural/Intercultural specialist for the BYU College of Education, besides teaching education foundation classes for undergraduate and graduate students. Dr. Clemmer has earned an M.A. in History, an M.A. in Education, and a Ph.D. in History. She is a former D'Arcy McNickle Research Fellowship recipient of the Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.

Notes:

1. *The Deseret News 1983 Church Almanac*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Press, 1982.
2. Ibid, Table 2, p. 188.
3. Ibid, Table 1, p. 168.
4. Wilkenson, Ernest L. and Cleon W. Skousen, *Brigham Young University: A School of Destiny*, Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975–76, pp. 596 and 738.
5. Interview with Dr. John R. Maestas, September 16, 1986.
6. Washburn, Wilcomb E., "The American Indian Studies: A Status Report," *American Quarterly*, XXVII (August, 1975), pp. 263–274.
7. Wilson, Terry P., "Custer Never Would Have Believed It: Native American Studies in Academia," *American Indian Quarterly*, 5 (August, 1979), p. 220.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid. There is a similarity between American Indians who not only must be American Indian and teach the subject, and those women who instruct Women's Studies.
10. *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 march 1980.
11. Wilson, op. cit., p. 208.
12. Interview with Dr. V. Con Osborne, September 12, 1986.
13. Gowans, Fred. R., "Native American Studies Minor," Departmental brochure, updated and published by the Brigham Young University Press.
14. Wilson, op. cit., p. 223. Dr. Wilson's observation has proven to be correct with the BYU Native American Studies classes, wherein non-Indians have been eager and capable students.